

URBAN CORRIDORS – I-405 IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

BRIEFING PAPER

Prepared for the
October 2002 Transportation Commission Meeting

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PURPOSE:

To provide an update on the project, with a focus on a likely first phase implementation plan.

ACTION/OUTCOME:

The Commission is informed about current events on the I-405 Improvement Project.

BACKGROUND:

In summer 2002 the I-405 Corridor Program completed three years of regional cooperation to develop a vision for reducing traffic congestion and providing mobility in the I-405 corridor. The vision is a balanced and integrated transportation solution including roadway, transit and environmental investments that support smart growth strategies. The corridor is one of the most congested freeways in the state, with up to 12 hours of congestion a day. By the year 2020, planned population and employment growth are expected to increase by 200,000 and 150,000, respectively. This expected growth corresponds to a 56 percent travel demand increase (in daily person trips). The I-405 corridor is also a critical component of our state economy and trade.

DISCUSSION:

Environmental Status

The WSDOT in cooperation with King County Metro, Sound Transit, FHWA and FTA released the programmatic Final Environmental Impact Statement on June 28th of this year. The Record of Decision (ROD) with FHWA and FTA will be signed this month completing the first phase of the work to develop the I-405 improvements. The ROD demonstrates federal approval of the I-405 Improvement Project. This programmatic ROD defines the Preferred Alternative (PA) and the multi-modal vision for the I-405 corridor for the next twenty years. The ROD is a critical milestone that allows the project

team to move forward with engineering, enables the project to receive federal funding, and it provides the ability for early right-of way acquisitions. Follow-on project specific environmental documentation will define project-specific actions.

The I-405 project is a multi-modal corridor solution that includes transit, arterials and freeway investments. The project's cost estimate range produced through WSDOT's Cost Estimate Validation Process (CEVP) is \$9.1 Billion to \$10.9 Billion (ten to ninety percent cost range; year of expenditure). The \$10.9 Billion includes \$2.3 Billion for HOV & transit, \$1.2 Billion for arterials, and \$7.4 Billion the freeway.

Implementation Planning

The following implementation principles have been adopted to help guide the Executive Committee's funding and phasing recommendations:

- Worst First,
- Fulfill the Vision,
- Build Logical Segments,
- Early Environmental Action,
- Minimize Risk and Delays,
- Minimize Construction Impacts,
- Provide Modal Balance, and
- Take Early Actions.

In August 2002, the Transportation Commission approved the scope of I-405 projects that outline how the \$1.77 Billion allocated for I-405 improvements in Referendum 51 would be implemented. Using Referendum 51 investments as a cornerstone for potential regional funding, mid-level (approx \$6 Billion) investment scenarios have been evaluated including an "Option A" implementation concept. "Option A" incorporates state and regional funding possibilities, reflects feedback and principles developed to date, and uses the CEVP cost estimates. Work continues with transit and local agencies, as well as the three county Regional Transportation Improvement District (RTID) to appropriately size the freeway, transit and arterial investments.

Getting Ready to Deliver

While the focus of recent work is on development of funding and phasing options, the project team continues strategy development to deliver the project once funding is approved. The team has already implemented a key organizational strategy through the successful integration (co-location) of our General Engineering Consultant (GEC). National experience has shown that co-location and integration is an essential ingredient for successful project delivery. Current funding levels only allow for a few key staff to co-locate with our GEC – but even at this level, co-location has proven to be successful.

Using the GEC's ability to tap into national expertise, the team has conducted four design charrettes to study critical, challenging areas of the corridor. The charrette teams developed innovative and cost effective design concepts to "kick start" the engineering and environmental phases of the program. Design charrettes have been completed for the SR 167 I/C in Renton, the north Renton vicinity, the Kirkland vicinity, and the Bothell vicinity. Two more design charrettes are planned for Bellevue and the two I-5

interchanges during the months of October and November. Visual outcomes from these charrettes will be showcased at three upcoming Public Open Houses October 22, 23 and 24 in Kirkland, Renton and Bellevue, respectively.

Three to four early environmental investment actions have been identified in the area of the I-405/SR 167 interchange. Over the next few months, the project team will begin scoping and preliminary engineering on the best of these actions. Construction is planned on the first of the early actions late next summer. Also in the next year, the project team will be preparing a corridor-level natural resources plan which will include a watershed characterization modeled after the SR 522 TPEAC effort.

The team will implement the following first steps once funding is available:

- Co-locate project staff with the GEC team.
- Begin corridor wide preliminary engineering. The Referendum 51 package includes \$100 million to begin the five percent design and environmental work throughout the corridor.
- Begin early right-of-way purchases.
- Implement early environmental investment actions, including the demonstration projects within the I-405/SR 167 interchange watershed.
- Implement early transportation demand management measures (TDM) to mitigate construction impacts. These actions may include increased transit service and vanpools and early construction of transit investments along the corridor.

RECOMMENDATION:

No action by the Commission is requested.

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